

Romance of Beautiful American Marchesa Peruzzi de Medici, Daughter of Sculptor Story

Revisiting This Country After a Half-Century's Absence She Talks of Many Famous Persons Among Her Friends

AFTER an absence of more than half a century the Marchesa Peruzzi de Medici of Florence and Rome is revisiting America. When she sailed away from New York some fifty years ago she was known to her friends as Edith Marion, the little daughter of William Wetmore Story and the granddaughter of Justice Story of the United States Supreme Court.

A few years later both father and daughter became personages of interest for both continents—W. W. Story as a great American sculptor living in Rome, Edith Marion as one of the most beautiful and popular American girls abroad. Then came her marriage to the Marchese Simone Peruzzi de Medici, head of a great family of Florence and chamberlain to the King of Italy. The beautiful American girl stepped into the inner circle of the Italian court. Queen Margherita became so fond of her that she was godmother to the Marchesa's second daughter.

"Though my early recollections are associated so closely with Italy, I couldn't feel like a stranger in America," the Marchesa told a reporter of THE SUN. "Going abroad when I was scarcely 6 years old, my first friendships were with the many distinguished persons who came so often to visit my parents. At that time of course I never thought of them as unusual in any way. Even Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whom of course I now admire and revere as a genius, seemed in my childish eyes like other ladies who were on intimate terms with my mother.

"Mr. and Mrs. Browning were among my parent's closest friends, and their only son, Pen—Robert Barrett Browning—was my playmate and lifelong friend. I was with him during the last days of his life. You remember he died last summer and without leaving a will, so that all the wonderful treasures of art and literature collected by his father will be scattered. I am afraid. Though Mrs. Browning was a great poetess and so universally admired she never appeared to be conscious of any personal superiority. Altogether she was one of the most lovable women I have ever known.

"It was not very long after we went to live in Rome that my eldest brother was taken ill and died. The shock was so great that my parents were overwhelmed. Because I was so young I didn't understand just why Mrs. Browning took me home with her, though even now I recall the pleasure I felt at having tea with Pen. In a short time—it may have been the next day—I was taken ill and was carried back home. It was during my convalescence following this fever that I grew to know and love Mr. Thackeray.

"When my mother first brought him in to see me he seemed like some great benevolent giant. Within a few minutes he had won my childish heart and I forgot all difference between us. It took a long time for me to get back my strength, and it was a dark day when the dear giant didn't make me a visit. He used to sit on the edge of my little white bed or draw his chair up close beside it. Then, joy of joys, one day he brought the first chapter of 'The Rose and the Ring' and read it to me.

"After that each day he made his appearance with a new chapter. He would read it to me, after which we would discuss it, I remember, with much gravity. We would talk about the people in the book, and to us at least they were real people. It was my part to hold the pages as he passed them on after reading. His writing was wonderful, so small, so exact. It used to seem to me that a giant couldn't write so small that he must have called in some fairy to do it for him. When I told him of my suspicions he only smiled, so for a long time I really believed he had done so.

"During some of his visits he would ask me to tell him a story. I used to do my best to remember or invent some little tale to amuse him. At these times he would sit beside the table and draw illustrations in pen and ink for what I

was telling him. Of these little drawings I now have only one. This was made for a tale which I called 'Zachary Hubs and His Boxtree Teapot.' The story has faded entirely from my memory, though the little drawing shows strongly the characteristics of the famous hand that sketched it so rapidly.

"When he came to tell me good-by he offered to give me the manuscript of 'The Rose and the Ring.' Ignorant child that I was, I told him that I preferred to have the first copy of the book. Think of losing such a treasure! I have never cared to be a millionaire unless my money would buy me back that manuscript. Oh, yes, I know where it is. I've kept track of it, and I suppose I might have had it for the asking a second time, only I hesitated to ask his daughters for anything so valuable.

"They were charming girls. Both of them were with their father during that visit to Rome. Later I saw them all together in Paris, where my parents took an apartment in the Avenue des Champs Elysees. Mr. Thackeray lived not far off with his mother, Mrs. Carmichael Smith, and his two little daughters.

"I met many celebrities during that stay in Paris. My mother used to give breakfast parties and I used to sit beside my window and watch the guests as they arrived and took their departure. It was only when Mr. Thackeray was among the guests that I was called. He was known to be my special friend and hence had many privileges. It made no difference how many great folk might be present he always remembered to ask for me and to find time to have some conversation suited to my taste. It was my custom on these occasions to tell him of my doings and my dolls, always feeling sure of his interest.

"My first acquaintance with Walter Savage Landor began one autumn in Siena. He came on a visit to my parents, and later took a cottage near us, which I remember was rented for him

by Mr. Browning. Oh, our acquaintance with the Brownings continued on without interruption. I saw more of them than of any of our other friends. It was Pen who kept watch outside my door during that terrible fever in Rome. He had a toy gun and used to tramp back and forth outside my door to make sure that no other horrid maladies came in.

"James Russell Lowell was another close friend of my father's whom I seem to have known always. He and my father were classmates in Harvard, both read prize poems, and years later walked together as representatives of America at the memorable festival of the University of Bologna, the oldest in the world.

"Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, Margaret Fuller and Charlotte Cushman were all friends from home who used to come often to visit my parents when I was a small child. Of course I heard them talk about America or 'home.' That was a subject of unexhaustible interest to my father, and of course to me, for even as a child my father and I were very close friends. I don't believe such perfect sympathy exists very often between a girl and her father as we felt for each other. That is one reason I am so thoroughly an American in spite of the fact that I have lived abroad for more than half a century. It is also a reason why I came in such close touch with the many famous men in his circle of intimate friends.

"Hans Christian Andersen was among them. My recollections of him are very distinct and very charming. Though strikingly homely in appearance his manner and conversation were most pleasing. He used to take the trouble to entertain me, something after the manner of Mr. Thackeray, and would cut out innumerable quaint little figures from blue paper. Though I liked his little figures I never thought to preserve them. You see a child doesn't realize always with whom she is associating. These friends of my parents were all so simple and charming that their greatness never impressed me. Mr. Gladstone and Thomas Carlyle were two of the same group. Both charm-



A hitherto unpublished photograph of William Wetmore Story and his family. From left to right, Julian Story, Mrs. W. W. Story, W. W. Story, Marchesa Peruzzi de Medici (Edith Marion Story) and Waldo Story.

has also written a tragedy in blank verse which received favorable criticism. "The Peruzzis are not idlers," the Marchesa tells you. "Many of the name have excelled in other fields besides politics and banking. Baldassare Peruzzi was one of Italy's greatest architects and painters. He lived early in the fifteenth century. The Iron Baron Riccardo was a cousin of my husband's, and Ubaldo, a member of the Italian Cabinet, was another cousin. The Peruzzi and Medici families intermarried years and years ago. When the last of the reigning line of the Medici lay dying in Pitti Palace she made her will naming the Peruzzi nearest of kin as heir to her property, with the proviso that he should assume the name and titles of the Medici. For some time the Peruzzi refused to do this, claiming that the Peruzzi title and record was as great as if not greater than the Medici. Finally the King expressed a wish to have it done. He felt that both families had done so much, their names were so closely interwoven in the history of Italy, that neither should be allowed to be unrepresented. It was at King Humbert's especial request that my husband added the de Medici.

"On my return to Italy I shall recall the happiest days of my life while writing my biography. It will have to be a long book if I tell of all the famous people I have known and the interesting incidents I have witnessed as my father's daughter and my husband's wife. I have known them in every field. In music there was Liszt, a friend of my father's, and a charming man as well as a great composer. When I think of the stage there was Tommaso Salvini, the great tragedian, another of my father's warm friends. Then there is Marion Crawford, a very dear friend.

"How do I feel toward America? Why, how does any one feel toward her home? I have the greatest admiration for it. It is the land of my birth, of my father's and my mother's. Naturally I think it wonderful, though I didn't need this visit to make me realize it."

Margherita Umberta Peruzzi de Medici, namesake and god-daughter of King and Queen of Italy, granddaughter of William Wetmore Story, the American sculptor.

"It was during that stay in Paris that my recollections of Robert Lytton began. He was the guest of my father and mother for the greater part of the winter. At that time he was an attaché at the British Embassy, but was induced by my father, because of the warm friendship existing between them and their many congenial pursuits, to make his home with us.

"M. de Tocqueville was another famous man of that date whom I remember. He used to pinch my cheek so hard. Mme. Mohl was among those whose arrival and departure I used to watch with interest. I recall just how she looked, dressed all in gray with a huge bonnet and dancing papillote curls. Once she was in such a hurry that she jumped into a puddle and had to take refuge in my room to dry her tiny feet.

"My first acquaintance with Walter Savage Landor began one autumn in Siena. He came on a visit to my parents, and later took a cottage near us, which I remember was rented for him

ing men, but I never thought of them as among the great men of the world." The Marchesa Peruzzi de Medici's recollections extend through one of the most interesting periods of Italy's history. In those days the Pope was not shut up in the Vatican. Pius IX. was among the first to recognize the genius of her father. So great was his admiration for the work of the American sculptor that he sent several pieces of it to an exhibition in London. It was at that exhibition that the sculptor first received general public recognition.

"I remember distinctly seeing Pope Pius IX. driving out in his gilded coach," the Marchesa continued. "That was of course before the unification of Italy. My husband was an officer in the Italian navy before he became court chamberlain. King Victor Emmanuel II. made him court chamberlain and he continued to hold that office under King Humbert. He sprang from a long line of vigorous ancestors. Away back in the twelfth century the Peruzzis were the great bankers of Europe, owning twenty large estates in Tuscany alone.

Marchese Rudolfo Peruzzi de Medici, grandson of Mr. Story.

"There is an I O U given by King Edward III. of England still in the possession of the Peruzzi family. It was given for money which the King borrowed to carry on the war between England and France. It was the war in which Crecy and Poitiers were the decisive battles, both gained by the English. Unfortunately Edward III. was not able to redeem his pledge to 'pay his good friend Peruzzi.' That is why the family still holds the royal I O U.

"It is not a bit like the I O U of to-day. Indeed it is quite a formidable affair, written on a large parchment with a number of seals. Once England won the war they didn't care what became of the King's promise. Parliament repudiated it. Disraeli and Gladstone both mentioned it in speeches before

The Marchesa Peruzzi de Medici, at six years of age, when she left New York with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Story.

Parliament as a debt the nation should pay. King Edward also expressed a wish that it might be paid. I don't believe, however, the Peruzzi family has the slightest idea of getting any part of it.

"My husband's position as chamberlain kept us at court and prevented me from leaving Italy. That is one reason why so many years passed without my carrying out my intention of returning to America. Then after his death there were our children to keep me in Italy. Now that my children are grown I take my first opportunity to return to the home of my childhood to see and know for myself the people and places my father and our friends have made me familiar with.

"Because of my husband's position I have known the kings and queens very well. It was at the request of Queen Margherita that I named my second daughter after her. The Queen was my daughter's godmother. Those were memorable days, and I love to look back on them. Queen Margherita has always been very fond of music. Her musical Mondays used to be very brilliant affairs in the court life at Rome. She is a

great admirer of Beethoven, and his compositions were played more than those of any other one composer at her musicals.

"It would be impossible to imagine a more perfect union than that of King Victor Emmanuel III. and Queen Elena. As the years pass they grow, if possible, more attached to each other. Their children are lovely. Really, it is an ideal family. Such things are said of other royal households. They may be true. I know that it is true of our King and Queen, and every one acquainted with the Italian court will tell you the same thing."

The Marchesa's only son, Rudolph, is the head of the Peruzzi de Medici family. He is now about 30, of a vigorous personality and actively interested in the management of his estates and in the affairs of Florence. In appearance he is a combination of the portraits of his father, the Marchese Simone Peruzzi de Medici, and his American grandfather. So far his inherited taste for art has shown itself chiefly in collecting hand wrought iron. His collection at the Peruzzi palace, near Florence, is said to be the finest in the world. He



Room in Peruzzi Palace, Florence, Italy, showing part of famous hand wrought iron, said to be most valuable collection of its kind.



Barberini Palace, the Marchesa Peruzzi de Medici's home in Italy.



Theatre room in Barberini Palace.